



## *City Manager's Bits & Pieces*

TO: St. Joseph City Commissioners

FROM: Richard I. Lewis, City Manager

DATE: October 3, 2013

Fall is at last upon us. Cooler weather, in the middle of the football season, baseball playoffs are beginning and soon the leaves will be changing their colors. It is a great time of the year.

Just a few things to bring you up to date.

**Downtown St. Joseph.** Last weekend was filled with numerous activities for everyone. Our thanks to the St. Joseph Today team for organizing all the events on Friday and Saturday and for the fall decorations in the downtown. The Wine & Food Festival and the Public Art Festival was very well attended. In case you missed it, the Public Art generated almost \$15,000 with one piece going for \$3,600. A huge thank you to Susan Solon, Jill Stone, and the Public Works Department for their efforts.

**Public Art.** Speaking of Public Art, we will be making a presentation for next year and the future at the October 14 City Commission meeting. There have been discussion with staff and other groups and ideas will be presented for your consideration.

**Abonmarche Agreement.** In May 2011, the City Commission had approved Abonmarche Consultants, Inc. to serve as the City's primary engineering firm. However, an agreement was not generated which would clarify and substantiate those services, as well as the roles and responsibility of the City and Abonmarche. A city team comprised of Community Development Director John Hodgson, City Engineer Tim Zebell, City Clerk/Finance Director Deb Koroch, City Attorney Laurie Schmidt, and myself worked with Abonmarche to develop such an agreement. While the agreement clarifies what services the City would utilize, the agreement is not

exclusive in that the City also reserves the right to seek other proposals for engineering services we deem to be in the best interest of the City. Deb Koroch has provided you a copy of the agreement, so if you have any questions, please let me know. The agreement will expire in May 2016.

**Cornerstone Alliance Agreement.** We are continuing to work on an Agreement with Cornerstone Alliance for Economic Development Services. Once we have a final version completed, it will be brought to the City Commission for consideration.

**HUD Investigation.** As mentioned in the last Bits and Pieces, we met, via telephone conference, with Larry Alcantar who is conducting the investigation for HUD. Just to keep everyone up to speed the following summary might be helpful.

A complaint was filed with the Assistant Secretary, and HUD has to complete an investigation or the City can propose to enter a conciliation agreement. Mr. Alcantar made it clear that if he proceeds with the investigation, it would encompass the Housing Commission and any other issues he discovered would have to be included and referred for further action and could result in additional charges against the City and/or the Housing Commission. If a reconciliation agreement is entered, no further investigation will be conducted. While it is felt an investigation would not find anything of substance, we believe it is in the best interest of the city to work toward a conciliation agreement.

A charge of race discrimination was brought against the City based on the residency requirement stated in the Housing Commission Ordinance. The City immediately rescinded the residency portion of the Housing Ordinance, which we believe was not being followed. The City has also proposed marketing the Housing facility through the City website, newsletters and brochures; promoting an Open House at the Housing facility; and promoting of Fair Housing Month in April. The Housing Commission's involvement will be an integral part of the process. The proposal also included making changes to the housing application process and wait list. City and Housing Commission staff previously reviewed Housing Commission information and processes in order to determine how best to respond to the charge. The Housing Commission's application process was reviewed, and the manner in which preference points are given appear to be in conflict with HUD rules. This also directly impacts the waiting list and could also tie into the claim of race discrimination.

At this point, it appears the City and HUD can reach an agreement, and any further HUD investigation related to this charge would cease. Mr. Alcantar is drafting a proposed conciliation agreement for the City and will send a draft within a week or two and then come to St. Joseph to finalize terms.

**Upcoming Meetings.** Traditionally the City had used the third Monday of October, the 21<sup>st</sup> this year, as a Study Session to go over the City Manager evaluation. Seeing how that isn't the case this year, that meeting will not need to take place.

We will need to hold a special meeting on October 28<sup>th</sup>. At this point there are three topics for the agenda: (1) An overview of Asset Management Planning, (2) Awarding a contract to an engineering firm to prepare a SAW (**S**tormwater, **A**sset Management, and **W**astewater) Grant application and perform the asset audit, and (3) Parameters regarding the Master Plan update.

**Joint Meeting with St. Joseph Board of Education.** The Board of Education would like to hold a joint lunch meeting with the City Commission. They have provided the following dates of October 16, 22, 23, 25, 29, or 30. Please let me know which will work for your schedule and I will let them know.

**St. Joseph and Benton Harbor Exchange Day.** Tony Saunders, Emergency Manager for Benton Harbor and I feel it would be good for both of our staffs if we exchange places for a day. We have tentatively selected October 21 as the day. Of course, neither of us will have any real authority, but it will be interesting to walk in another's shoes.

**Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library Update.** Attached is the Director's Report from the Tuesday, September 24, 2013 Library Board Meeting Packet. In follow-up with Stephanie Masin, the Library Board did approve the propose changes in Hours of Operation and the Operating Hours to conduct the Special Inventory Project.

**Close City Items.** (1) November 11 is Veteran's Day and most governmental offices are closed. While the day isn't a holiday for the City, City Hall staff has recommended closing City Hall and use the day as an "in-service" day to conduct trainings and general catch-up on miscellaneous items. The City Commission will still take place that evening. (2) By the end of the month, the limestone portion of the exterior will be clean for a cost under \$2,500. We figured that if we are requiring property owners to maintain their property, we should be doing the same. While this isn't paint, keeping it clean counts.

**Partnership for Place.** During my time away from local government, especially in Michigan, there are a number of topics and issues which haven't changed. Attached is a Michigan Municipal League piece titled *Partnership for Place: An Agenda for a Competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Michigan* for your review which is a major change in focus for cities and villages in Michigan which is a major change. This Policy Agenda was approved by the MML in June of this year to set into motion what cities and communities should be striving toward in order "to provide key services and amenities that contribute to a high quality of life." Please take the time to read this agenda. It provides thoughts for our consideration as we get ready to set the City's goals and objectives in January. There is more to come on this.

**Closing thought. Don't think "what if."** Spending your time imagining what would have been if you could have changed some little thing, some little decision in your life, is counterproductive and leaves you unhappy. Think about how you can improve for the future, but don't waste your present thinking about how you could have changed the past.

Have a great and safe weekend.